

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 1006 – State Highway Administration – Vegetation Management – Pollinator Habitat Plan

Dear Chair Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 1006 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 1006 requires MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) to develop a pollinator habitat plan to manage the vegetation in SHA right-of-way, would require SHA to reduce mowing along State highways, and require SHA to develop policies and procedures for educating and communicating to the public about the pollinator habitat and mowing practices. Finally, House Bill 1006 requires SHA to apply for federal funding that supports pollinator friendly native plants.

In 2016, the General Assembly passed the Pollinator Habitat Act, which requires SHA, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, to develop a pollinator habitat plan. Since the plan was developed, SHA has implemented five pollinator habitat gardens, at welcome centers, office sites, and rest stops in Howard and Frederick County. SHA is currently inventorying future sites in different locations across the State for future pollinator habitats. The Pollinator Habitat Plan is readily available on SHA’s website.

The SHA follows the Turf Management Guidelines to make decisions on best mowing practices along State highways. Mowing is an important maintenance activity that requires thoughtful decision making to maintain a safe, functional, clean, and environmentally sustainable roadway system.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) includes numerous discretionary grant programs that State and local governments may apply. The IIJA includes a grant program for ‘Pollinator-friendly practices on roadsides and high-way rights-of-way’; however, this program is not currently funded.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 1006.

Respectfully submitted,

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